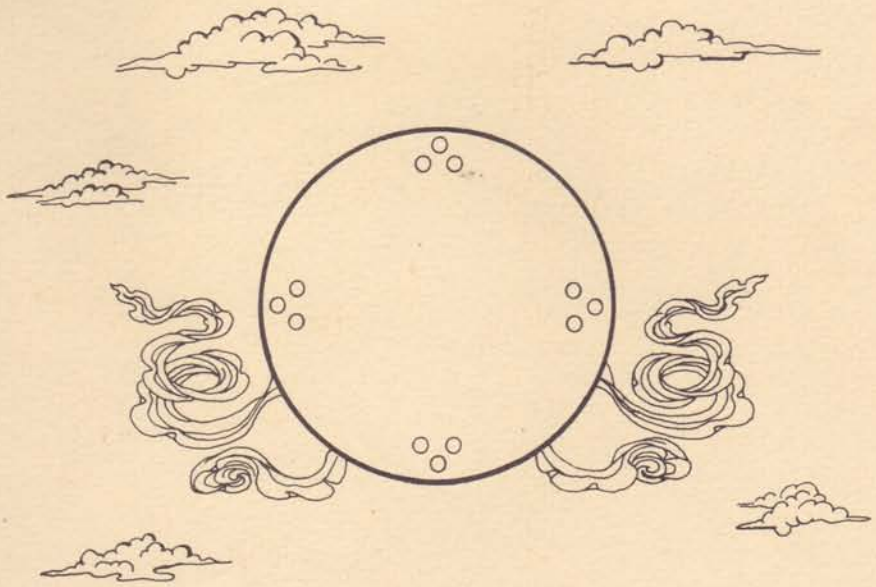
NAMKHAI NORBU

THE MIRROR

ADVICE ON PRESENCE AND AWARENESS



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PREFACE

On the occasion of the lst. International Convention on Tibetan Medicine, it is my great pleasure to be able to present this translation of a text on the subject of awareness or mindfulness and how it should be applied to one's daily life. This subject is closely linked to what is called the individual's 'conduct' (*spyod-lam*), which is one of the fundamental principles of the Tibetan medical system.

The author of the text I have translated is Professor Namkhai Norbu, who, besides being one of the foremost present day exponents of Tibetan culture, is an important Lama (or master) of the spiritual tradition known as *rDzogs-chen*, an ancient system of meditation found throughout Tibet among both the Buddhist and the Bon traditions.

Professor Norbu spent the first twenty years of his life in Tibet, where he received a full traditional education in all the various branches of Tibetan knowledge, and in 1960 he was invited by Professor Tucci to come to Italy to work with him at the Institute for Far and Middle Eastern Studies (I.S.M.E.O.) in Rome. From then on Professor Norbu has carried out a programme of indepth research into the origins of Tibetan culture, with particular emphasis on the study of the Bon tradition, and of the history of Zhang-Zhung, an ancient kingdom sited to the west of present day Tibet. Professor Norbu has also written many books, some of which have been published in India. He presently teaches at the Oriental Institute of The University of Naples, but more informally he conducts teaching retreats all over the world at which he gives instruction on all aspects of Tibetan culture, particularly Yoga, medicine and astrology.

Over the last ten years there has arisen, under his precious guidance, first

in Italy and later in other countries, what has come to be known as the *rDzogs-chen* Community, an informal association of individuals from different social backgrounds who, while still fulfilling their usual roles in society in general, share the common interest of following and practising the teachings which Namkhai Norbu continues to transmit.

It was actually for the occasion of a retreat held by this Community in Sardinia over the Christmas period of 1977 that this book came to be written. Professor Norbu, in a conversation at that retreat, explained his reasons for writing the book as follows: "In all spiritual teachings there are rules, like those, for example, found in the *Sūtras* and the *Tantras*. The masters of the *rDzogs-chen* tradition, however, understanding the basic principle of these rules, have always taught that the individual must have true awareness. But what actually is this awareness? Since no real explanation of it existed, it occurred to me to write this book".

The teaching of *rDzogs-chen*, or the Great Perfection, aims at bringing the individual to the recognition and experience of his or her own true and authentic condition. To this end it teaches one to observe oneself to discover one's own limits, and thus to be able to get out of the cage of the dualistic condition created by one's own mental activity.

A human being is considered to be made up of three interlinked patterns of activity: the body; the voice, or vital energy; and the mind. Through the integration and relaxation of these three, the individual must rediscover his or her own 'Primordial State of pure awareness' (*rig-pa*), the renewed experience of the mind's intrinsic primordial quality, beyond and free from the dualistic divisiveness of mental constructions. Once the rediscovery of this inherent experience has been reawakened by means of an Introduction to it, given by the Master, the principle practice for the disciple consists of continuing in this state of awareness.

Through the loss of the experience of the original condition of pure awareness the passions (*nyon-mongs*) arise in the individual as states of disturbance within the psyche. These passions themselves are then the causes of transmigration within the cycle of conditioned phenomena, known as the Wheel of *Samsara*. This same concept is also linked to the fundamental basis of the theory of Tibetan medicine, which considers that illnesses manifest as a result of the arising

of the passions. Thus, specifically, it is considered that hatred (*zhe-sdang*), mental obscuration (*gti-mug*), and attachment (*'dod-chags*) are directly linked to the three humours which govern the functions of the physical organism: bile (*mkhris-pa*), phlegm (*bad-kan*), and air (*rlung*).

The particular disturbance and imbalance of these three humours that goes along with the condition of a specific illness depends for the most part on the incorrect attitude of the sick person's body, voice, and mind. It is for this reason that maximum importance is given to the individual's awareness, and continuous attention is advocated with regard to the individual's correct behaviour in relation to a given illness. Thus the behaviour and attitude of the patient comes to be one of the prime factors of any cure, as important as the specific curative methods, medicines and diet used.

The same principle of awareness or mindfulness is the fundamental principle of the *rDzogs-chen* teaching, in which everything is ultimately entrusted to the self-governing responsibility of the individual. Each individual must continually observe him- or herself to know if his or her practice is truly functioning, so that it does not remain only something limited to a theoretical knowledge, or become another way of fooling oneself. As far as this real application of the teachings in one's actual life is concerned, Namkhai Norbu has said: "Practising means living without becoming distracted".

There is no particular commitment to be made other than this. Since there is no one who can say 'I'm sorry, dear Master, I haven't been able to live!', there is thus no one who can say 'I couldn't manage to practise!'.

This present text contains the essence of a very ancient spiritual tradition which is very much alive and relevant to the present day, and is now spreading in the West. Its title, "The Mirror" reflects the heart of the *rDzogs-chen* teaching, referring to the mirror of our own true nature, the true state of being of each and every individual.

I would like to thank Professor Namkhai Norbu for his help with this translation.

Adriano Clemente
Arcidosso, 11 April 1983

THE MIRROR

advice on presence and awareness

I pay homage to my Master!

A practitioner of *rDzogs-chen* must have precise presence and awareness. Until one really and truly knows one's own mind and can govern it with awareness, even if very many explanations of reality are given, they remain nothing more than ink on paper or matters for debate among intellectuals, without the possibility of the birth of any understanding of the real meaning.

In the *Kun-byed rgyal-po* (1), a *tantra* of *rDzogs-chen*, it is said that: "The Mind is that which creates both *Samsāra* and *Nirvāna*, so one needs to know this King which creates everything!".

We say we transmigrate in the impure and illusory vision of *Samsāra*, but in reality, it's just our mind that is transmigrating.

And then again, as far as pure Enlightenment is concerned, it's only our own mind, purified, that realizes it.

Our mind is the basis of everything, and from our mind everything arises, *Samsāra* and *Nirvāna*, ordinary sentient beings and Enlightened Ones.

Consider the way beings transmigrate in the impure vision of *Samsara*: even though the Essence of the Mind, the true nature of our mind, is totally pure right from the beginning, nevertheless, because pure mind is temporarily obscured by the impurity of ignorance, there is no self-recognition of our own State. Through this lack of self-recognition arise illusory thoughts and actions created by the passions. Thus various negative karmic causes are accumulated and since their maturation as effects is inevitable, one suffers bitterly, transmigrating in the six states of existence (2). Thus, not recognizing one's own State is the cause

of transmigration, and through this cause one becomes the slave of illusions and distractions. Conditioned by the mind, one becomes strongly habituated to illusory actions.

And then it's the same as far as pure Enlightement is concerned; beyond one's own mind there is no dazzling light to come shining in from outside to wake one up. If one recognizes one's own intrinsic State as pure from the beginning and only temporarily obscured by impurities, and if one maintains the presence of this recognition without becoming distracted, then all the impurities dissolve. This is the essence of the Path.

Then the inherent quality of the great original purity of the Primordial State manifests, and one recognizes it and becomes the master of it as a lived experience.

This experience of the real knowledge of the authentic original condition, or the true awareness of the State, is what is called *Nirvāna*. So Enlightenment is nothing other than one's own mind in its purified condition.

For this reason Padma Sambhava (3) said: "The mind is the creator of *Samsāra* and of *Nirvāna*. Outside the mind there exists neither *Samsara* nor *Nirvana*."

Having thus established that the basis of *Samsāra* and *Nirvāna* is the mind, it follows that all that seems concrete in the world, and all the seeming solidity of beings themselves, is nothing but an illusory vision of one's own mind. Just as a person who has a 'bile' disease sees a shell as being yellow even if one can see objectively that that is not its true colour, so in just the same way, as a result of the particular karmic causes of sentient beings, the various illusory visions manifest.

Thus, if one were to meet a being of each of the six states of existence on the bank of the same river, they would not see that river in the same way, since they each would have different karmic causes. The beings of the hot hells would see the river as fire; those of the cold hells would see it as ice; beings of the hungry ghost realm would see the river as blood and pus; aquatic animals would see it as an environement to live in; human beings would see the river as water to drink; while the demi-gods would see it as weapons, and the gods as nectar.

This shows that in reality nothing exists as concrete and objective. Therefore, understanding that the root of *Samsāra* is truly the mind, one should set

out to pull up the root. Recognizing that the mind itself is the essence of Enlightenment one attains liberation.

Thus, being aware that the basis of *Samsāra* and *Nirvāna* is only the mind, one takes the decision to practise. At this point, with mindfulness and determination, it is necessary to maintain a continuous present awareness without becoming distracted.

If, for example, one wants to stop a river from flowing, one must block it at its source, in such a way that its flow is definitively interrupted; whatever other point you may choose to block it at, you will not obtain the same result. Similarly, if we want to cut the root of *Samsāra*, we must cut the root of the mind that has created it; otherwise there would be no way of becoming free of *Samsāra*. If we want all the suffering and hindrances arising from our negative actions to dissolve, we must cut the root of the mind which produced them.

If we don't do this, even if we carry out virtuous actions with our body and voice, there will be no result beyond a momentary fleeting benefit. Besides, never having cut the root of negative actions, they can once again be newly accumulated, in just the same way that if one only lops off a few leaves and branches from a tree instead of cutting its main root, far from the tree shrivelling up, it will without doubt grow once again.

If the mind, the King which creates everything, is not left in its natural condition, even if one practises the tantric methods of the 'Developing' and 'Perfecting' stages (4), and recites many mantras, one is not on the path to total liberation. If one wants to conquer a country, one must subjugate the King or the Lord of that country; just to subjugate a part of the population or some functionary won't bring about the fulfillment of one's aim.

If one does not maintain a continuous presence, and lets oneself be dominated by distractions, one will never liberate oneself from endless *Samsāra*. On the other hand, if one doesn't allow oneself to be dominated by neglectfullness and illusions, but has self-control, knowing how to continue in the true State with present awareness, then one unites in oneself the essence of all the Teachings, the root of all the Paths.

Because all the various factors of dualistic vision, such as *Samsāra* and *Nirvāna*, happiness and suffering, good and bad, etc., arise from the mind, we can conclude that the mind is their fundamental basis. This is why non-

distraction is the root of the Paths and the fundamental principle of the practice.

It was by following this supreme path of continuous presence that all the Buddhas of the past became enlightened, by following this same path the Buddhas of the future will become enlightened; and the Buddhas of the present, following this right path, are enlightened. Without following this Path, it is not possible to attain enlightement.

Therefore, because the continuation in the presence of the true State is the essence of all the Paths, the root of all meditations, the conclusion of all spiritual practices, the juice of all esoteric methods, the heart of all ultimate teachings, it is necessary to seek to maintain a continuous presence without becoming distracted.

What this means is: don't follow the past, don't anticipate the future, and don't follow illusory thoughts that arise in the present; but turning within oneself, one should observe one's own true condition and maintain the awareness of it just as it is, beyond conceptual limitations of the 'three times'.

One must remain in the uncorrected condition of one's own natural state, free from the impurity of judgements between 'being and non-being', 'having and not-having', 'good and bad', and so on.

The original condition of the Great Perfection is truly beyond the limited conceptions of the 'three times'; but those who are just beginning the practice, at any rate, do not yet have this awareness and find it difficult to experience the recognition of their own State; it is therefore very important not to allow oneself to be distracted by the thoughts of the 'three times'.

If, in order not to become distracted, one tries to eliminate all one's thoughts, becoming fixated on the search for a state of calm or a sensation of pleasure, it is necessary to remember that this is an error, in that the very 'fixation' one is engaged in is, in itself, nothing but another thought.

One should relax the mind, maintaining only the awakened presence of one's own State, without allowing oneself to be dominated by any thought whatsoever. When one is truly relaxed, the mind finds itself in its natural condition.

If out of this natural condition thoughts arise, whether good or bad, rather than trying to judge whether one is in the calm state or in the wave of thoughts, one should just acknowledge all thoughts with the awakened presence

of the State itself.

When thoughts are given just this bare attention of simple acknowledgement, they relax into their own true condition, and as long as this awareness of their relaxedness lasts one should not forget to keep the mind present. If one becomes distracted and does not simply acknowledge the thoughts, then it is necessary to give more attention to making one's awareness truly present.

If one finds that thoughts arise about finding oneself in a state of calm, without abandoning simple presence of mind, one should continue by observing the state of movement of the thought itself.

In the same way, if no thoughts arise, one should continue with the presence of the simple acknowledgement that just gives bare attention to the state of calm. This means maintaining the presence of this natural state, without attempting to fix it within any conceptual framework or hoping for it to manifest in any particular form, colour, or light, but just relaxing into it, in a condition undisturbed by the characteristics of the ramifications of thought.

Even if those who begin to practise this find it difficult to continue in this state for more than an instant, there is no need to worry about it. Without wishing for the state to continue for a long time and without fearing the lack of it altogether, all that is necessary is to maintain pure presence of mind, without falling into the dualistic situation of there being an observing subject perceiving an observed object.

If the mind, even though one maintains simple presence, does not remain in this calm state, but always tends to follow waves of thoughts about the past or future, or becomes distracted by the aggregates of the senses such as sight, hearing, etc., then one should try to understand that the wave of thought itself is as insubstantial as the wind. If one tries to catch the wind, one does not succeed; similarly if one tries to block the wave of thought, it cannot be cut off. So for this reason one should not try to block thought, much less try to renounce it as something considered negative.

In reality, the calm state is the essential condition of mind, while the wave of thought is the mind's natural clarity in function; just as there is no distinction whatever between the sun and its rays, or a stream and its ripples, so there is no distinction between the mind and thought. If one considers the calm state as something positive to be attained, and the wave of thought as something

negative to be abandoned, and one remains thus caught up in the duality of accepting and rejecting, there is no way of overcoming the ordinary state of mind.

Therefore the essential principle is to acknowledge with bare attention, without letting oneself become distracted, whatever thought arises, be it good or bad, important or less important, and to continue to maintain presence in the state of the moving wave of thought itself.

When a thought arises and one does not succeed in remaining calm with this presence, since other such thoughts may follow, it is necessary to be skillful in acknowledging it with non-distraction. 'Acknowledging' does not mean seeing it with one's eyes, or forming a concept about it. Rather it means giving bare attention, without distraction to whatever thought of the 'three times', or whatever perception of the senses may arise, and thus being fully conscious of this 'wave' while continuing in the presence of the pure awareness. It absolutely does not mean modifying the mind in some way, such as by trying to imprison thought or to block its flow.

It is difficult for this acknowledgement with bare attention, without distraction, to last for a long time for someone who is beginning this practise, as a result of strong mental habits of distraction acquired through transmigration in the course of unlimited time. If we only take into consideration this present lifetime, from the moment of our birth right up until the present we have done nothing other than live distractedly, and there has never been an opportunity to train in the presence of awareness and non-distraction. For this reason, until we become no longer capable of entering into distraction, if, through lack of attention, we find ourselves becoming dominated by neglectfullness and forgetfullness, we must try by every means to become aware of what is happening through relying on the presence of mind.

There is no 'meditation' that you can find beyond this continuing in one's own true condition with the presence of the calm state, or with the moving wave of thought. Beyond recognition with bare attention and continuing in one's own State, there is nothing to seek that is either very good or very clear.

If one hopes that something will manifest from outside oneself, instead

of continuing in the presence of one's own State, this is like the saying that tells about an evil spirit coming to the Eastern gate, and the ransom to buy him off being sent to the Western gate. In such a case, even if one believes one is meditating perfectly, in reality, it's just a way of tiring oneself out for nothing. So continuing in the State which one finds within oneself is really the most important thing.

If one neglects that which one has within oneself and instead seeks something else, one becomes like the beggar who had a precious stone for a pillow, but not knowing it for what it was, had to go to such great pains to beg for alms for a living.

Therefore, maintaining the presence of one's own State and observing the wave of thought, without judging whether this presence is more or less clear, and without thinking of the calm state and the wave of thought in terms of the acceptance of the one and the rejection of the other, absolutely not conditioned by wanting to change anything whatsoever, one continues without becoming distracted, and without forgetting to keep one's awareness present; governing oneself in this way one gathers the essence of the practice.

Some people are disturbed when they hear noises made by other people walking, talking and so on, and they become irritated by this, or else, becoming distracted by things external to themselves, they give birth to many illusions. This is the mistaken path known as "the dangerous passageway in which external vision appears to one as an enemy". What this means is that, even though one knows how to continue in the knowledge of the condition of both the state of calm and the wave of thought, one has not yet succeeded in integrating this state with one's external vision.

If this should be the case, while still always maintaining present awareness, if one sees something, one should not be distracted, but, without judging what one sees as pleasant, one should relax and continue in the presence.

If a thought arises judging experience as pleasant and unpleasant, one should just acknowledge it with bare attention and continue in present awareness without forgetting it.

If one finds oneself in an annoying circumstance, such as surrounded by a terrible row, one should just acknowledge this disagreeable circumstance and continue in present awareness, without forgetting it.

If one does not know how to integrate the presence of awareness with all one's daily actions, such as eating, walking, sleeping, sitting, and so on, then it is not possible to make the state of contemplation last beyond the limited duration of a session of sitting meditation. If this is so, not having been able to establish true present awareness, one creates a separation between one's sessions of sitting practice and one's daily life. So it is very important to continue in present awareness without distraction, integrating it with all the actions of one's daily life. The Buddha, in the *Prajnapāramitā Sūtra* (5) said: "Subhuti, in what way does a *Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva*, being aware that he has a body, practise perfect conduct? Subhuti, a *Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva*, when walking, is fully mindful that he is walking; when he stands up is fully mindful of standing up; when sitting is fully mindful of sitting; when sleeping is fully mindful of sleeping; and if his body is well or ill, he is fully mindful of either condition!" That's just how it is!

To understand how one can integrate present awareness with all the activities of one's daily life, let's take the example of walking. There's no need to jump up immediately and walk in a distracted and agitated way, marching up and down and breaking everything one finds in front of one, as soon as the idea of walking arises. Rather, as one gets up, one can do so remembering "now I am getting up, and while walking I do not want to become distracted".

In this way, without becoming distracted, step by step, one should govern oneself with the presence of awareness. In the same way, if one remains seated, one should not forget this awareness, and whether one is eating a tasty morsel, or having a drop to drink, or saying a couple of words, whatever action one undertakes, whether it is of greater or lesser importance, one should continue with present awareness of everything without becoming distracted.

Since we are so strongly habituated to distraction it is difficult to give birth to this presence of awareness, and this is especially true for those who are just beginning to practise. But whenever there's any new kind of work to be done, the first thing one has to do is to learn it. And even if at the first few attempts one is not very practised, with experience, little by little the work becomes easy. In the same way, in learning contemplation, at the beginning one needs commitment and a definite concern not to become distracted, following that one must maintain present awareness as much as possible, and finally, if one becomes distracted, one must notice it.

If one perseveres in one's commitment to maintaining present awareness, it is possible to arrive at a point where one no longer ever becomes distracted. In general, in *rDzogs-chen*, the Teaching of spontaneous self-perfection, one speaks of the self-liberation of the way of seeing, of the way of meditating, of the way of behaving, and of the fruit (6), but this self-liberation must arise through the presence of awareness.

In particular, the self-liberation of the way of behaving absolutely cannot arise if it is not based on the presence of awareness. So, if one does not succeed in making the self-liberation of one's way of behaving precise, one cannot overcome the distinction between sessions of sitting meditation and one's daily life.

When we speak of the self-liberation of one's way of behaving as the fundamental principle of all the *tantra*, the *āgama*, and the *upadeša* (7) of *rDzogs-chen*, this pleases the young people of today a great deal. But some of them do not know that the real basis of self-liberation is the presence of awareness, and many of them, even if they understand this a little in theory, and know how to speak of it, nevertheless, just the same have the defect of not applying it. If a sick person knows perfectly well the properties and functions of a medicine and is also expert ingiving explanations about it,but doesn't ever take the medicine, he or she can never get well. In the same way, throughout limitless time we have been suffering fromthe seriousillness of being subject to the dualistic condition, and the only remedy for this illness is real knowledge of the state of self-liberation without falling into limitations.

When one is in contemplation, in the continuation of the awareness of the true State, then it is not necessary to consider one's way of behaving as important, but, on the other hand, for someone who is beginning to practise, there is no way of entering into practice other than by alternating sessions of sitting meditation with one's daily life. This is because we have such strong attachment, based on logical thinking, on regarding the objects of our senses as being concrete, and, even more so, based on our material body made of flesh and blood.

When we meditate on the 'absence of self-nature', examining mentally our head and the limbs of our body, eliminating them one by one as 'without self', we can finally arrive at establishing that there is no 'self' or 'I'.

But this 'absence of self-nature' remains nothing but a piece of knowledge arrived at through intellectual analysis, and there is as yet no real knowledge of this 'absence of self-nature'. Because, while we are cosily talking about this 'absence of self-nature', if it should happen that we get a thorn in our foot, there's no doubt that we'll right away be yelping 'ow! ow! ow!' This shows that we are still subject to the dualistic condition and that the 'absence of self-nature' so loudly proclaimed with our mouth has not become a real lived state for us. For this reason it is indispensible to regard as extremely important the presence of awareness which is the basis of self-liberation in one's daily conduct.

Since there have been different ways of regarding conduct as important, there have arisen various forms of rules established according to the external conditions prevailing at the time, such as religious rules and judicial laws. There is, however, a great deal of difference between observing rules through compulsion and observing them through awareness. Since, in general, everyone is conditioned by *karma*, by the passions, and by dualism, there are very few people who observe rules and laws through awareness. For this reason, even if they don't want to do so, human beings have had obligatorily to remain subject to the power of various kinds of rules and laws.

We are already conditioned by *karma*, by the passions, and by dualism. If one then adds limitations derived from having to compulsorily follow rules and laws, our burden becomes even heavier, and without doubt we get even further from the correct "way of seeing" and from the right "way of behaving".

If one understands the term 'self-liberating' as meaning that one can just do whatever one wants, this is not correct; this is absolutely not what the principle of self-liberation means, and to believe such a mistaken view would show that one has not truly understood what awareness means.

But then again we should not consider the principle of laws and rules as being just the same as the principle of awareness. Laws and rules are in fact established on the basis of circumstances of time and place, and work by conditioning the individual with factors outside him or herself. Awareness, on the other hand, arises from a state of knowledge which the individual him or herself possesses. Because of this, laws and rules sometimes correspond to the inherent awareness of the individual, and sometimes do not. However, if one has awareness, it is possible to overcome the situation of being bound by compulsion to

follow rules and laws. Not only is this so, but an individual who has awareness and keeps it stably present is also capable of living in peace under all the rules and laws there are in the world, without being in any way conditioned by them.

Many Masters have said: "Urge on the horse of awareness with the whip of presence!" And, in fact, if awareness is not quickened by presence it cannot function.

Let's examine an example of awareness: suppose that in front of a person in a normal condition there is a cup full of poison, and that person is aware of what it is. Adult and balanced persons, knowing the poison for what it is and aware of the consequences of taking it, do not need much clarification about it. But they have to warn those who don't know about the poison being there, by saying something like: 'In this cup there is some poison, and it's deadly if swallowed!' Thus, by creating awareness in others, the danger can be avoided. This is what we mean by awareness.

But there are cases of persons who, although they know the danger of the poison, don't give any importance to it, or still have doubts as to whether it really is a dangerous poison, or who really lack all awareness, and with these people it is simply not sufficient to just say: 'This is poison'. For them one has to say: 'It is forbidden to drink this substance, on pain of punishment by the law'. And through this kind of threat the law protects the lives of these individuals. This is the principle on which laws are based, and even if it is very different from the principle of awareness, it is nevertheless indispensible as a means to save the lives of those who are unconscious and without awareness.

Now we can continue the metaphor of the poison to show what we mean by presence. If the person who has a cup of poison in front of them, even though they are aware and know very well what the consequences of taking the poison would be, does not have a continuous presence of attention to the fact that the cup contains poison, it may happen that they become distracted and swallow some of it. So if awareness is not continually accompanied by presence it is difficult for there to be the right results. This is what we mean by presence.

In the *Mahāyāna*, the principle to which maximum importance is given, and the essence itself of the *Mahayana* doctrine, is the union of voidness and compassion. But, in truth, if one does not have awareness inseparably linked to presence, there absolutely cannot arise a really genuine compassion. As long as

one does not have the real experience of being moved by compassion for others, it is useless to pretend that one is so very full of compassion. There is a Tibetan proverb about this which says: "Even if you've got eyes to see other people, you need a mirror to see yourself!" As this proverb implies, if one really wants a genuine compassion for others to arise in oneself, it is necessary to observe one's own defects, be aware of them, and mentally put yourself in other people's places to really discover what those persons' actual conditions might be. The only way to succeed in this is to have the presence of awareness.

Otherwise, even if one pretends to have great compassion, a situation will sooner or later arise which shows that compassion has never really been born in us at all.

Until a pure compassion does arise, there is no way to overcome one's limits and barriers. And it happens that many practitioners, as they progress in the practice, just end up thinking of themselves as being a 'divinity' and thinking of everyone else as being 'evil spirits'. Thus they are doing nothing other than increasing their own limits, developing attachment towards themselves, and hatred towards others. Or, even if they talk a great deal about *Mahāmudrā* (8) and *rDzogs-chen*, all they are really doing is becoming more expert and refined in the ways of behaving of the eight wordly *dharma* (9). This is a sure sign that a true compassion has not arisen in us, and the root of the matter is that there has never really arisen the presence of awareness.

So, without chattering about it, or getting caught up in trying to hide behind an elegant facade, one should try to really and truly cause the presence of awareness to actually arise in oneself, and then carry it into practice. This is the most important point of the practice of *rDzogs-chen*.

This book is dedicated by the practitioner of *rDzogs-chen*, Namkhai Norbu, to his disciples of the *rDzogs-chen* Community.

Into the lion's mouth!

NOTES

1) The *Kun-byed rgyal-po,* when translated means "The King which creates everything", and is the principal *tantra* of the *Sems-de* or Series of the Mind, one of the three series of the written *rDzog-chen* teachings.

2) The Six states of existence *(rigs-drug)* are the six principle dimensions of karmic vision, each one caused by the prevalence of a particular passion. They are: the realm of the *deva* or divinities, caused by attachment; the realm of the *asuras* or demigods, caused by jealousy; the human realm, caused by pride; the animal realm, caused by mental obscuration; the *preta,* or hungry ghost realm, caused by greed, and the hell realm, caused by anger.

3) Padma Sambhava, who lived around the eighth century A.D., is one of the principal exponents of Tantrism, and it is traditionally considered that he was one of the first masters to introduce Tantric Buddhism to Tibet. He is also regarded as one of the principal Masters of the spiritual lineage of *rDzogs-chen.*

4) This refers to very complex practices that are characteristic of the *Anuttara Tantra,* the path that involves the transformation of the psychophysical constituents of the individual into the wisdom energy of Realization. The "Developing Stage" (*bskyed-rim*) implies elaborate techniques of visualization, recitation of *mantra* and the use of symbolic gestures (*mudra*). The "Perfecting Stage" (*rdzogs-rim*), through internal concentration on the *nadi* and on the *chakra,* has as its ultimate aim the goal of bringing the practitioner into the state of contemplation.

5) The *Prajñapāramitā Sūtra* is one of the fundamental *sutra* of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, the 'Greater Vehicle'. The *sutra* explains the doctrine of 'voidness' (*sūnyatā*) that shows how all phenomena lack intrinsic existence or self-nature.

6) The first three are the fundamental components of explanation of the *rDzogs-chen* teaching. The 'Way of Seeing' (*lta-ba*) mentally involves becoming aware of one's own actual condition; the 'Meditation' (*sgom-pa*) is the experiencing of the natural state of one's mind; and the 'Way of

Behaving' (*spyod-pa*) is the application of this state of knowledge in one's daily life. Beyond these three is 'The Fruit' (*bras-bu*), or total realization of the state beyond dualism.

7) This is a subdivision of terms particular to *rDzogs-chen*. What are meant by *tantra* are fundamental teachings revealed directly from the dimension of the *Dharmakaya*, the essential state of all Realized Beings. What are meant by *agama (lung)* are teachings transmitted through a *Sambhogakaya* manifestation, the *Sambhogakaya* being the dimension of the pure luminosity of the individual's energy. What are meant by *Upadesa (man-ngag)* are more detailed teachings, derived from the direct experience of Masters.

8) The *Maha-Mudra (phyag-rgya chen-po)* is the arrival point of the practices of the *Anuttara Tantra;* it is the state in which the practitioner no longer experiences any distinction between meditation and all that arises in normal daily life. In this sense it corresponds to the State of *rDzogs-chen*, even though the path to arrive at it is different. This teaching of *Maha-Mudra*, originally transmitted by the Indian *siddha*, later spread widely in Tibet, principally in the *bka'-rgyud-pa* Buddhist school.

9) The eight wordly *dharma (jig-rten chos-brgyad)* are as follows: loss and gain, fame and notoriety, praise and blame, and happiness and suffering.